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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Corridor forums rare opportunities (Editorial)

Posted: Sunday, Sep 21, 2008 - 08:57:16 pm PDT

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The public has asked for the chance to pose direct questions about the proposed expansion of Coeur d'Alene's educational corridor.

This week, they'll get it.

Corridor advocates have scheduled a pair of two-hour meetings in which any citizen can ask any question about the corridor without moderator interference. Further, questions will not be screened or edited. Any citizen may step up, ask a question, get it answered by whomever he or she designates, and sit down.

The first such opportunity is tomorrow from noon to 2 p.m. in the Coeur d'Alene School District's Midtown meeting room, at Fifth Street and Linden Avenue.

The second meeting is Thursday from 7 to 9 a.m. in North Idaho College's Edminster Student Union Building. That one takes place in the Lake Coeur d'Alene Room.

Panelists include NIC President Priscilla Bell, University of Idaho VP Larry Branen, Lewis-Clark State College Regional Director Cyndie Hammond, Coeur d'Alene Mayor Sandi Bloem and Lake City Development Corp. Executive Director Tony Berns.

Certainly, these meetings are intended to help the panelists sell their vision of the corridor expansion, starting with a \$10 million purchase of 17 acres just north of NIC's campus. But they go beyond that. The meetings represent a significant attempt by corridor supporters to hear from critics, face to face and without interference. It's a bold step that we hope is enlightening to the public and panelists alike.

Having said that, we urge citizens participating in these meetings to be clear, concise and respectful. At a candidates' forum last week, one panelist whose responsibility was to ask questions instead sounded like one of the politicians, sharing her opinions and urging the audience to show support for her position. That should have embarrassed the panelist; it did undermine her credibility and cast an unfortunate shadow over the position she's so passionate about.

We can be certain that if either of this week's meetings is not conducted civilly, public officials will be reluctant to offer this format in the future. Our community has been given an opportunity for open communication that should not be squandered.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Our View: WWAMI works

Investing in program makes sense for Idaho

Our View

September 19, 2008

The praise keeps coming for a collaborative program called WWAMI that for 37 years has allowed first-year students from Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho to study at the University of Washington medical school without leaving their home states.

Students and the states save a bundle in education costs. Plus, states increase the odds that those students will return home after they get their degrees and fill slots in rural areas, which struggle with chronic shortages of physicians.

But Idaho Gov. Butch Otter is unimpressed.

"I'm terribly disappointed in WWAMI," Otter told a medical education committee in Boise on Monday. "It's not doing its job."

Idaho is hit particularly hard by the shortage of doctors in rural areas and ranks 49th in the nation in the number of doctors per capita. Plus, 40 percent of the state's doctors are at least 55.

The solution is to add to the 20 slots the Idaho Legislature funds each year. The University of Idaho recommends doubling that figure at a cost of about \$1 million a year.

No, says Otter. Idaho needs its own medical school to ensure a stable supply of doctors.

The University of Idaho and Boise State University favor a WWAMI expansion. Timothy White, then-UI president, said in January that 305 Idaho-funded graduates were practicing in the state, including 37 percent of Idaho's family practice physicians. The retention rates compare favorably to states with medical schools.

Otter's call for a medical school is particularly strange because a couple of days later he announced big budget cuts to account for less-than-expected revenue.

Doubling the WWAMI slots would be much cheaper than starting a medical school.

Last year, the Washington Legislature added 20 slots for students to study medicine at Spokane's Riverpoint campus. Another eight dental students are joining them through collaboration between Eastern Washington University and the University of Washington. Meanwhile, medical students in Pullman and Moscow fill another 40 slots.

The idea is to spread the students through the region, with the hopes that some will practice outside big population centers. The dental students must commit to a four-week summer rotation in a rural community.

As a Western Washington University student told The Spokesman-Review: "I'd definitely say that this exposure will increase the odds of us practicing on this side of the state."

Otter should shelve the medical school plan and go for the double WWAMI.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Moscow school nurse has her hands full

Moscow has one nurse working with more than 2,400 students; Pullman has three and would like more

By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Geoff Crimmins/Daily News

Beth Papineau said her job couldn't be done by just anyone.

"It's a combination of nursing and mothering," said Papineau, who has worked as a nurse for 21 years. She's just beginning her second year as the sole nurse for the Moscow School District.

The federal government recommends a ratio of one nurse for every 750 students. There are a little more than 2,400 students in the Moscow School District.

"Some days I'm pulling my hair out, but we do OK," Papineau said.

Papineau said she loves her job, but that her days can get crazy. She tries to stick to a strict weekly schedule that includes a visit to each of the four elementary schools, Moscow Junior High School, Moscow High School and Paradise Creek Regional High School.

She carries a cell phone so she's accessible to all schools at all times.

"It's a very big job, a really big job," Papineau said.

At the beginning of the school year, Papineau screens all entering kindergartners for vision, hearing, color-blindness and lice. She also deals with stacks of medical forms for students with ongoing conditions like asthma or diabetes.

Papineau periodically screens older students for vision and hearing, and teaches "growing up" classes to fifth- and sixth-graders. She also coordinates flu shots for district staff, and teaches first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation certification classes.

"Then I just do all the everyday things that come along," Papineau said.

She said it's hard to describe what she does on a daily basis because every day is so different.

"My job is really educating staff to follow through with the things I don't have time to do," she said.

The Pullman School District also has enough students to warrant three nurses. The difference is that Pullman already has three nurses - and would like more.

"Really I would like to see a nurse in every building," said Michelle Hyatt, head nurse for the Pullman School District.

She said the district has the nurses it needs, but she'd always like to have more.

Moscow School District Superintendent Candis Donicht said the nursing-staff difference between the districts can be attributed to the difference in state funding for education.

"In an ideal world, the district could use more of every professional service that we offer: More teachers, more counselors, more professionals from every realm," Donicht said. "But we have to live within the resources that are allocated by the state."

Moscow is not alone. According to a May report by the National Association of School Nurses, the school nurse-to-student ratio for the state of Idaho is one to every 2,368 students.

Donicht said school nurses in Idaho are certified with teaching credentials, so nurses count toward the number of state-funded teaching positions in each district.

"It's a problem for smaller districts with limited resources," Donicht said.

Rural districts in both Whitman and Latah counties contract with local health departments for nursing services. Donicht said contracting nurses is a much cheaper option than paying salary and benefits for a full-time nurse.

Districts in Whitman County contract with the Whitman County Health Department for nurses, while rural Latah County districts contract with the North Central District Health Department.

"If I had to say if I would like more time (with a nurse), I would say yes," Genesee School Principal Loretta Stowers said.

She said the nurse travels to Genesee on a regular basis and is on call for emergencies.

Calvin Spangler, superintendent for the Kendrick-Julietta Joint School District, said although he believes the health department contract works well, he would like to see the district hire a full-time nurse.

"But that costs money," Spangler said. "I wish I could have a nurse between the two buildings, but that just is unrealistic at this time."

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Students take science outside

Prairie Middle School youngsters get hands-on lesson in McCall

By Kerri Sandaine

Saturday, September 20, 2008

Contributed photo

Tanner Ross and Emily McHugh use their field guide books for tree identification in the unmanaged forest of Ponderosa State Park near McCall.

COTTONWOOD - The great outdoors turned out to be a giant laboratory for some young scientists at Prairie Middle School.

The sixth-grade class recently returned from three days at the McCall Outdoor Science School where they conducted experiments under blue skies, far from the confines of a classroom.

They gave the trip high marks for making science fun and used words such as "macro invertebrate" and "damselfly nymph" with confidence during their enthusiastic descriptions of the experience.

"I liked finding dissolved oxygen the best," said Whitney Sonnen, 11. "We added chemicals to the water and it changed colors. Some of it was poisonous, so we got to wear gloves and goggles. I learned about different plants like the ponderosa pine. The bark smells wonderful. Other plants are sagebrush and gray rabbit brush. They smell awful."

"We looked at clouds and predicted whether it would rain," added Justin Ross, 12. "It never rained once. I fell in the marsh in a really deep hole. I was just messing around. I came out with a big, old bucket with like 20 macro invertebrates in it. A couple looked like a beetle and a teeny snake-type thing."

Their teacher, Becky Higgins, said the kids hiked through managed and unmanaged forests along Payette Lake and around a huge marsh while using scientific tools to collect data. The program addresses Idaho state science education standards in an engaging, enriching and safe environment, she said.

"It's a great way to get these kids feeling like real scientists," Higgins said.

"We had buckets and we took spoons and put bugs in ice trays," said Emily McHugh, 11. "We found larva and damselfly nymphs in a lily marsh."

The University of

Idaho's McCall Outdoor Science School was founded in 2001, and since then fifth- and sixth-graders throughout the state have visited the school for a hands-on science experience that emphasizes the relationships between biological, physical, and social systems.

The 33 kids from Prairie Middle School visited the outdoor classroom with the help of \$3,500 in federal Title III funds administered through the Idaho County Commission. Several students are making a presentation about the trip at 2 p.m. Monday at the county commission meeting.

"I liked identifying trees," said Ali Hoene, 11. "Where we were looking, we saw the biggest ponderosa in Ponderosa State Park. It smelled like maple syrup."

"At the end of our hike, we looked at the soil and the temperature," said Dally Ratcliff, 11. "It was really fun."

Distance Academy shows progress

Public charter school has made many changes and met federal benchmarks for first time this year

By Kerri Sandaine

Monday, September 22, 2008

Idaho Distance Education Academy's new director, Linda Sterk, is shown in her office in Deary.

DEARY - As the new director of Idaho Distance Education Academy, Linda Sterk oversees about 900 students and 60 staff members spread throughout the state.

The K-12 public charter school has large population bases in Boise, Idaho Falls and Post Falls. But the administrative headquarters are in this small Latah County town of 538 residents, and the school's business office is a few miles down the road in neighboring Bovill, which has a population of 300.

One reason the Whitepine Joint School District set up the charter school in 2004 was to create jobs in the small communities. Six people are employed at the Deary office and another seven jobs were created in Bovill.

"I like the small-town atmosphere," said Sterk, who used to teach school in Chicago and New York. She and her husband, a biology professor at Washington State University, moved to Moscow about eight years ago.

Sterk, 50, taught two years for IDEA before going into administration. She took the charter school reins from Daryl Bertelsen, who retired this year from his dual superintendent duties at the charter school and the Whitepine Joint School District.

"The school is very different from what we were four years ago," Sterk said. "We've put a number of changes in place that we are really excited about. Parents are using research-based curriculum, our teachers are providing direct instruction for some of our students, and students develop and share portfolios of their work."

In addition, the staff size has doubled, three resource centers have been opened, and the high school program has been restructured. The improvements have had a positive effect on student achievement, she said.

After two consecutive years of missing the No Child Left Behind benchmarks, the distance learning academy met the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements in reading, math and language usage this year.

"We're really proud of our students and parents for making AYP," Sterk said. "We have to meet proficiency one more year in language usage to get out of AYP jail."

Craig Dalton, a Whitepine School Board member and former chairman of IDEA, said the charter school was created to provide state funding for parents who want to educate their kids at home, and to allow the state to monitor and assess the students through standardized testing. Economic development was another consideration, he said.

Sterk said the model of the charter school, which was set up by Bertelsen and the school district, is unique. An individual learning plan is created for each student, parents have a choice of curriculum, and students can visit libraries and computer labs in Boise, Pocatello and Post Falls.

"Our certified teachers work with parents who are educating students in the home," she said. "Our kids take all the same standardized tests as other public schools, and we are funded through the state Department of Education."

IDEA is not a virtual school, does not receive state transportation funds, and the curriculum is not provided by corporations, she said. No religious curriculum is provided through the public school.

Annual allotments for students enrolled in IDEA are \$600 for kindergartners, \$1,200 for grades first through third, \$1,400 for grades fourth through eighth, and \$1,600 for grades ninth through 12th. The funds are used to purchase curriculum and materials. The state also provides computers upon request.

Professional development takes place regionally every month, Sterk said, and the entire staff gathers in one location twice a year. Students do most of their work online, but also take part in field trips and community events. Extended support is offered for kids who need extra help, she said.

"We feel like our school has great potential because of the commitment of parents and the experience of certified teachers," Sterk said.

The charter school remains under the umbrella of the Whitepine School District at this time. Having the schools lumped together affects federal funding and test results, officials said, but past efforts to move IDEA under the state charter school commission were unsuccessful.

Combining the ISAT test scores used to gauge No Child Left Behind proficiency levels has created some challenges for the charter school and the school district. Because the academy scores are included in its results, the district has been in improvement status because it missed the mark in the subgroup of students with disabilities, Dalton said.

Ordinarily, the charter school and school district wouldn't be required to meet the standards because there are not 34 students who fit the category at either school, Dalton said. The group includes students with behavioral problems, as well as kids who have physical, emotional or learning disabilities.

Overall, the distance learning academy seems to be on the right track, he said.

"I think it's going pretty well," Dalton said. "Like any new enterprise, there is a learning curve. I've seen them make some really good directional changes and progress."

In the schools

Monday, September 22, 2008

Knowledge Bowl
registration Thursday

Knowledge Bowl registration for the 2008-2009 Lewiston School District's fifth- and sixth-grade competitions is Thursday.

The registration will be from 3:30 to 7 p.m. at Whitman Elementary School gymnasium. Teams must register at this time to be eligible for participation. A coaches' clinic will take place from 7 to 8 p.m. next Monday at Whitman Elementary School.

Clarkston school has
cyber bullying program

Lincoln Middle School in Clarkston will present a program on cyber bullying Wednesday.

The Unicel program, titled "Standup!" will be presented by Shanterra McBride, to seventh- and eighth-graders during school hours Wednesday, then at 6:30 that evening she will present it for

parents and community members in the gymnasium. For more information on this program, visit www.unicel.com/standup.

LHS Alumni Directory set for publication

The first-ever Lewiston High School Alumni Directory will be published in late spring.

The directory will include photographs and information as well as names and biographical information on as many graduates as possible. The project is being done at no cost to the school district or its patrons and the proceeds from the sale of the directory will be used by Lewiston Independent Foundation for Education to fund scholarships for graduates of Lewiston High School.

For more information, Joy Rapp, superintendent, may be contacted at (208) 748-3043; John Tait, Lewiston High School Alumni Association, at (208) 743-6231; or Carol Wallace, LIFE president, at (208) 748-3625.

Clarkston sets meeting on AIDS education

Clarkston School District will have a meeting with parents of fifth- through 12th-graders to preview the AIDS prevention education program.

The meeting is planned for 7 p.m. Thursday at Lincoln Middle School. This will allow families an opportunity to inspect materials and have family discussions about the subject matter.

Clarkston board to hear about JROTC program

A new marksmanship program for the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Clarkston High School and ratification of a contract with the Clarkston Education Association are two of the agenda items at the regular Clarkston School Board meeting tonight.

The meeting begins at 6 p.m. at the district office, 1294 Chestnut St.

The two-year contract the board will discuss includes a state-mandated cost-of-living increase for teachers and some language adjustments, said Superintendent Pete Lewis.

Air rifles will be used at an indoor range for the marksmanship program, he said. A trap shooting program for JROTC is already in place.

Other agenda items include an athletic trainer contract, letter of agreement for school health services and board comments.

Asotin Elementary sets book fair event

The Scholastic Book Fair will be at the Asotin Elementary School Library Wednesday through Sept. 30.

The fair allows families to shop for their favorite family stories in a safe environment, while adding to the library and classrooms.

Holiday card contest
set for Idaho students

Tom Luna, Idaho superintendent of public instruction, announced a holiday card contest for elementary school students statewide.

The contest is open to all kindergarten through sixth-graders. One drawing will be selected to be published on the State Department of Education's Web site at www.sde.idaho.gov, as well as being used as the department's greeting card.

This is a list of instructions for the contest:

Drawings should reflect winter scenes in Idaho that are not copyrighted images.

Drawings should be on an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper in a landscape format.

Drawings must be properly and legibly labeled, with student's name, grade, district, school, and teachers name, all on the back of the artwork.

Students may use many colors in their drawings, which can be done in watercolors, colored paper, markers, crayons or a combination. Fabric designs and pencil drawings are not suitable to the printing process.

Entry into the contest constitutes a waiver of copyrights and permission to republish entries without compensation.

Entries will not be returned.

The deadline for submission is Oct. 24 and results will be announced in December. Drawings should be mailed to: State Department of Education; Attn: Public Information, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0027.

Grant, roofing project
top board agenda

ASOTIN - The Asotin-Anatone School Board will hear reports on the Safe Routes to Schools grant and a roofing project at its regular meeting at 7 tonight in the Asotin High School library.

Keltic Engineering, the firm handling construction management on the safety project, will give the board an update, along with architect Robert Uhrich, who will discuss the grant-supported roofing project. In addition, Dan Button, coordinator of the community's alcohol coalition grant, is on the agenda.

Other board items include a form revision for non-resident students, allowing the use of vans to transport students, and the use of administrative match money.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

No new education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Voters OK bond for a new Middleton high school

- STATESMAN STAFF

Edition Date: 09/20/08

Middleton School District will get a new high school.

Voters overwhelmingly approved a \$51.9 million bond Thursday for construction of the school as part of a 10-year facilities plan.

The vote was 86 percent in favor and 14 percent opposed. A two-thirds majority is needed for approval. The vote count was 1,163 in favor, 191 opposed.

The school is expected to open in fall 2011.

Construction of a new high school is not related to a fire that gutted the district's high school in 2007.

Southern Idaho taxpayers approve school levy

- The Associated Press

Edition Date: 09/20/08

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Patrons in the Twin Falls School District have approved an emergency levy of more than \$414,000 to help the district deal with an increase in students this year.

Superintendent Wiley Dobbs said enrollment numbers have climbed by 150 compared to last year.

The money will pay for 10 modular classrooms at several schools.

The emergency levy means taxpayers will see an increase of nearly 15 cents for every \$1,000 of taxable property value. The emergency levy will be on property tax bills this December and in June 2009.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

As charter school opens, Gooding's K-8 numbers decline

District might be forced to cut positions next year

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

Gooding School District's enrollment this year dropped from last year, and the change comes as a new charter school opened its doors in the community.

The bulk of the district's drop in enrollment - 112 students - comes from the grades North Valley Academy in Gooding serves, kindergarten to eighth grade. Gooding School District had 114 students request records for transferring to North Valley Academy, Superintendent Heather Williams said.

The declining enrollment may mean Gooding School District will cut staff for the 2009-10 school year, Williams said. The decrease in enrollment could affect six to eight staff positions next year, she said, adding that it's only an early estimate. The district currently has about 74 teachers, which includes part-time educators and counselors.

Gooding Elementary School took the brunt of the 112-student decline and has 75 fewer students, a decrease from 632 to 557 students. Meanwhile, enrollment at Gooding Middle School declined by 37 students and currently sits at 251 students.

Williams said the district has to be careful with its finances.

"We don't have a hefty fundbalance," she said. "We have to operate fairly closely to what the state funds us for."

The district will begin planning its in November. In the middle of the month, the Idaho State Department of Education provides its first report of average daily attendance for the current school year, a move that helps districts map out funding for the following year.

While overall enrollment is down, the district did gain about 60 new students, Williams said.

The district also has a fairly high rate of students moving in and out of the area, which also contributes to enrollment dropping, Williams said.

Enrollment this year looks better for the higher grades.

It increased by 13 students at Gooding High School, where there are 337 students. At Gooding Accelerated Learning Center, an alternative high school, there are 50 students, an increase of 12 students.

However, the high school grades may see a change next fall when high school students can enroll in North Valley Academy.

"We're anticipating another drop in enrollment," Williams said.

Sally Toone, co-president of the Gooding Education Association, said the focus needs to remain with teaching the students. Additionally, Gooding High School has an excellent graduation rate, she said.

Gooding High School's graduation rate for the 2007-08 school year was 94.52 percent - higher than the state average of more than 88 percent, according to the school's Web site.

Deby Infanger, chairman of the board for North Valley Academy, said the school is just providing another educational option and not trying to hurt Gooding School District. The charter school's 149 students includes formerly home-schooled children, as well as students from nearby Wendell and Glenns Ferry.

"We just felt that it was very important to offer school choice in Gooding," she said. "We love the idea of bringing choice to parents and students. We thought it was very important to bring that opportunity to Gooding."

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or bbotkin@magicvalley.com.

Wendell students protest perceived color ban

By Mary Hanson

Times-News correspondent

Students at Wendell High School Wednesday did not actively participate in an organized demonstration concerning what colors they can wear to school. They may, however, have worn red and blue clothing to protest colors they thought were going to be banned by district administrators.

There were no banners and no slogans. School principal Jon Goss said, "Nothing has happened. There is no protest. Kids are present at school; they are attending classes as usual."

Many students visiting at the entrance to the high school during Wednesday's lunch period were wearing red and blue in some way. One boy pointed to his knee-length shorts which had a red and blue pattern. One girl was wearing blue jeans, a red T-shirt and blue jean jacket. There were eight or nine boys wearing sports jerseys in the school colors, navy and gold.

Red and blue have traditionally been associated with Los Angeles street gangs the Bloods and the Crips, respectively. Both Goss and District Superintendent Greg Lowe said there are no real gangs in the school populations.

Lowe said he doesn't know of a demonstration. He said he had no phone calls about it but wondered if recent talk about keeping gang colors, attire and behaviors from creeping on to the school yards might have precipitated some rumors.

"The school board, at its regular meeting, has been discussing attire and gang-related colors in a brain-storming fashion," Lowe said. "We are probably going to be discussing that again at the next regular meeting, but, we have no plans to ban any colors."

Lowe said it is not unusual for the board to discuss these subjects as they work to stay on top of what is going on within the populations of the high school and middle school.

In developing policy and thinking ahead, Lowe said, "The board was concerned that putting bans on common colors that are worn in regular school clothes would be impractical and cause hardships."

Teachers at the high school said that by wearing red and blue, some kids might have been just saying they couldn't afford to get new clothes.

During a May 20 board meeting, district officials adopted a strict standard code of dress after talk swirled concerning a possible uniform policy at the middle school.

Read more information about the standard code of dress at Wendell schools by visiting the Wendell Web site: www.sd232.K12.id.us.

Mary Hanson may be reached at mhansonmbd@aol.com.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Twin Falls Voters Ok Emergency School Levy

Patrons in the Twin Falls School District have approved an emergency levy of more than \$414,000 to help the district deal with an increase in students this year.

Superintendent Wiley Dobbs said enrollment numbers have climbed by 150 compared to last year.

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Sharing love of music

Woman works with students in After School Strings, Program

POCATELLO — Amanda Kent is living proof that what goes around, comes around.

Kent started playing violin in the After School Strings program more than 20 years ago — today she teaches other students in District 25.

“It’s a way to give something back,” she said. “It all comes back around.”

Currently in its 21st year, Kent said the program is funded equally by the school district and student fees — the arts program was launched by Kent’s former teacher, Sandra Kenney.

The After School Strings program not only instills a love for the arts and music, it also expands scholarship opportunities for students.

“There are lots of scholarships available for students with a music background,” Kent said.

Students in Chubbuck attend classes on Monday and Wednesday, and students in the rest of the district are bused to Green Acres Elementary School on Tuesday and Thursday.

“And any student who has played for at least one year can play in the Bach orchestra on Friday at Alameda Middle School,” Kent said. “The cool thing about that is that they get to play with a full orchestra.”

Kent, a native of Pocatello, is looking for local donations of cash and musical instruments to help provide scholarships for the program.

A graduate of the University of Idaho with degrees in public relations and animal science. She currently works as a substitute teacher for District 25.

Miss Rodeo Idaho in 2003, Kent now serves as a judge for the queen competition at the annual Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo, and still rides and trains horses.

“I like to stay busy,” she said. “And I just can’t say ‘no.’”

While she was in college, isj

Kent served as ambassador for the college, president of a student housing and played on the rugby team.

Currently, she and her family are working with the University of Utah on a collection of photographs of Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

A member of the Japanese Citizens League in Pocatello, Kent is also involved in creating a memorial to the Minidoka internment camp.

Whatever the future holds, Kent doesn’t plan on slowing down any time soon.

“Currently, I’m just looking for that perfect career job,” she said.

Looking at the facts of ISU plan for med school

he several critics of Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas' proposal for a statewide medical education program say it is unneeded and would be too costly, especially in a year when state revenue already is down by an estimated 6 percent.

Maybe the opponents of the Vailas plan have a point, this year at least, or maybe they are misinformed. Newspapers in Lewiston and Boise, as well as the University of Idaho and Boise State University, all favor instead doubling Idaho's seats at the University of Washington Medical School.

The Idaho Statesman says that would cost a relatively modest \$1 million per year.

But what would the Vailas plan for distributive medical education cost, and what benefits would it reap? The numbers seem hard to come by, even as a joint interim legislative committee considers options. And for that matter, how much does Idaho pay the Washington school to educate doctors? And how many qualified applicants are turned away?

Idaho is a participant in the WWAMI program which also enables Wyoming, Alaska and Montana to send students to Seattle. Idaho students pay their own tuition, but Wyoming pays all the costs for its students in exchange for making a three-year commitment to practice medicine in that state.

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter has been willing to listen to the Vailas plan, and says he is disappointed in WWAMI for one reason — it has not produced enough doctors for Idaho once they finish the program. But the governor also says all options are still on the table, including the UI's proposal to expand WWAMI seats for Idaho to 40 from 20.

Meanwhile, it's significant that Idaho State University already has a thriving degree-granting program to train physician assistants. With an enrollment of 100 or so out of 400 applicants, the PA graduates go on to work under supervising physicians, performing up to 90 percent of the doctor's chores. Physician assistants are especially useful in rural clinics, where MD's are a scarce commodity. They do not perform surgeries or other serious duties, but for many matters they are invaluable. Short of a full medical school, the PA program is a critical stopgap in health care and is described as the closest thing to a medical school in the state.

ISU also runs various medical residency programs, and has 176 clinical faculty and affiliation with 150 hospitals. The school is home to a school of nursing, and a College of Pharmacy along with various health science programs. At the same time, UI, BSU and Lewis-Clark State College also have programs which would contribute to any medical education plan for Idaho, which Vailas recognizes.

State Sen. Bob Geddes, R-Soda Springs, is co-chair of the interim committee. He is making no promises beyond surveying existing medical education programs and defining the health care problems of the state.

If there is a feasibility study already out there, perhaps he'll let everyone in on it. Because while all the fulminating goes on, the inescapable fact remains that Idaho ranks 49th in the U.S. in number of doctors per capita, and many of them are not getting any younger.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

S. Idaho taxpayers approve school levy

TWIN FALLS (AP) -- Patrons in the Twin Falls School District have approved an emergency levy of more than \$414,000 to help the district deal with an increase in students this year.

Superintendent Wiley Dobbs said enrollment numbers have climbed by 150 compared to last year.

The money will pay for 10 modular classrooms at several schools.

The emergency levy means taxpayers will see an increase of nearly 15 cents for every \$1,000 of taxable property value. The emergency levy will be on property tax bills this December and in June 2009.